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Nutrition Research at ERS

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Food Assistance & Nutrition
Research Program

*Economic Research for a Healthy,
Well-Nourished America*

The Economic Research Service studies diet and health and evaluates the Nation's domestic food and nutrition assistance programs. ERS research is designed to meet the critical information needs of Congress, program managers, policy officials, the research community, and the public at large.

Recent nutrition-related research reports from ERS

Effects of USDA's Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs on Nutrition and Health

This four-volume series is a comprehensive review and synthesis of research on the impact of USDA's Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs (FANP). The programs provide a "food safety net" that served 1 in 5 Americans at some point during fiscal year 2003, at a cost of \$41.6 billion. The four Effects of Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs on Nutrition and Health reports are: Volume I: Research Design, Volume II: Data Sources, Volume III: Literature Review, and Volume IV: Executive Summary of the Literature Review.

Nutrition and Health Characteristics of Low-Income Population

These four reports examine the nutritional and health characteristics of four subpopulations that are major users of USDA food assistance and nutrition programs: participants in the Food Stamp Program (FSP), participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), school-age children, and older Americans. Research briefs accompany the series, highlighting major findings from the reports.

Maternal Employment and Children's Nutrition

A majority of U.S. women with children are now employed outside the home. This ERS-funded study by Abt Associates Inc. used mid-1990s data to explore the relationship of mothers' work to the quality of their children's diets, participation in USDA food assistance programs, risk of overweight, and other nutrition-related factors. The researchers also examine how USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meets the nutrition needs of participating children.

Taxing Snack Foods: What to Expect for Diet and Tax Revenues

Health researchers and health-policy advocates have proposed levying excise taxes on snack foods as a way to address the prevalence of obesity and overweight in the United States, or to fund an information program. This research examines what impact such taxes might have on snack food purchases and the implications for diet quality and tax revenues, using data from a household survey of food purchases.



The Role of Economics in Eating Choices and Weight Outcomes

The 1994-96 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals and the 1994-96 Diet and Health Knowledge Survey are analyzed to ascertain if economic factors explain weight differences among adults of various demographic subgroups.

How Much Do Americans Pay for Fruits and Vegetables?

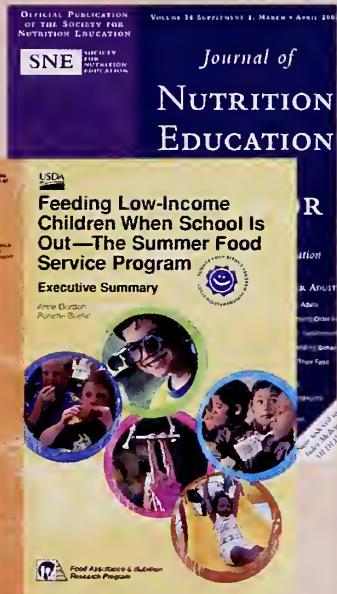
This analysis uses ACNielsen Homescan data to look at household retail food purchases to estimate an annual retail price per pound and per serving for 69 forms of fruits and 85 forms of vegetables. Of the fruits and vegetables ERS priced, more than half were estimated to cost 25 cents or less per serving. Consumers can meet the recommendation of three servings of fruits and four servings of vegetables daily for 64 cents.

Metropolitan Area Food Prices and Children's Weight Gain

This ERS-funded study by Roland Sturm and Ashlesha Datar examined how local food costs relative to the cost of living were associated with changes in children's weight status between kindergarten and third grade, using nationally representative data available from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort. It found that children who lived in metropolitan areas where fruits and vegetables were relatively more expensive gained significantly more weight than did otherwise similar children who lived in areas where fruits and vegetables cost less.

FoodReview: The Graying of America

This FoodReview focuses on the elderly in America, looking at demographic characteristics, diet quality, food expenditures, food security, food stamp use, and risk of foodborne disease.



FoodReview: Examining the Well-Being of Children (Vol. 24, No. 2)

Articles in this issue of FoodReview provide background and information on the diet and health of children.

Feeding Low-Income Children When School Is Out—The Summer Food Service Program

This is the first comprehensive nationally representative study of the Summer Food Service Program in more than a decade. State administrators, sponsor staff, and site staff reported on program operations and factors that affect participation. The study also examined the nutritional quality of meals served and the extent of plate waste.

Prototype Notebook: Short Questions on Dietary Intake, Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors

This report provides a compendium of 128 survey questions used in previous research to assess dietary knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors for low-income adult populations. The report is part of a larger ERS research effort to develop a common core set of questions to assess the dietary behavior impact of Food Stamp Nutrition Education on Food Stamp Program participants. It may also be useful to researchers and evaluators working with this population.

ERS Support for Nutrition Education Research and Evaluation

Journal of Nutrition Education, Supplement Issue: Evaluation of Nutrition Education with Low-Income Families. Volume 33, Supplement 1, 2001.

ERS collaborated with the Society for Nutrition Education and USDA's Food and Nutrition Service on a series of articles on the state of the art in measurement of the effects of nutrition education, focusing on topics central to nutrition education in the Food Stamp Program. Available at: www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodStamps/readings.htm

Advancing the Practice of Food Stamp Nutrition Education Evaluation: Art and Science

ERS awarded a grant to the Society for Nutrition Education (SNE) to support this workshop, which brought together a broad representation of State Food Stamp Nutrition Education directors, social science research and evaluation specialists, and representatives of several Federal agencies to discuss strategies for addressing food stamp nutrition education research and evaluation needs.

Proceedings are available at www.csrees-fsne.org/conf-proc.cfm

Understanding Fruit and Vegetable Choices: Research Briefs

Fruit and vegetable consumption still lags behind Federal dietary guidance. These seven research briefs provide information on the economic, social, and behavioral factors influencing consumers' fruit and vegetable choices.

- **Understanding Fruit and Vegetable Choices—Economic and Behavioral Influences**
- **U.S. Fruit and Vegetable Consumption—Who, What, Where, and How Much**
- **What Determines the Variety of a Household's Vegetable Purchases?**
- **How Much Do Americans Pay for Fruits and Vegetables?**
- **Low-Income Households' Expenditures on Fruits and Vegetables**
- **The USDA Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program Evaluation**
- **Fruit and Vegetable Consumption—Looking Ahead to 2020**

Food Assistance Research Briefs

This group of briefs looks at issues currently facing Federal programs targeted specifically to children. Each issue brief within the series provides a succinct summary of ERS research on a policy-relevant topic, as well as a short resource list identifying relevant ERS research publications, web addresses, and subject matter specialists. Topics include:

- **A Healthy School Meal Environment**
- **Competitive Foods: Soft Drinks vs. Milk**
- **Do Healthy School Meals Cost More?**
- **Childhood Obesity and the Role of USDA**
- **The USDA Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program Evaluation**

The complete list of research briefs can be accessed at: www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr34/

The Economic Research Service (ERS) is the main source of economic information and research from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The mission of ERS is to inform and enhance public and private decisionmaking on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, natural resources, and rural development.

For more information on ERS publications and ongoing research, visit our website at www.ers.usda.gov. Sign up to receive e-mail updates on new publications, conferences, and funding opportunities. Go to www.ers.usda.gov/updates and then select "Food & Nutrition Assistance Programs" as a topic of interest.

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